

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 AF-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 IO-10 DHA-02 /084 W

----- 120130

R 052146Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1428

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 0083

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR VE POR

SUBJECT: SOARES VISITS VENEZUELA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. DURING HIS VISIT TO VENEZUELA SOARES MET WITH MOST OF THE HIGH COMMAND OF THE GOV AND GOVERNING ACCTION DEMOCRATICA, INCLUDING PRESIDENT PEREZ, AS WELL AS THE PRESS AND LEADING MEMBERS OF THE LARGE LOCAL PORTUGEUSE COLONY. SOARES PUBLICLY PROCLAIMED PORTUGUESE NEUTRALITY IN ANGOLA WHILE PRIVATELY TELLING THE DCM THAT HE WAS UNAWARE OF ANGOLA-BOUND CUBAN TROOP TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT REFUELING IN THE AZORES. SOARES DISCUSSED PORTUGUESE IMMIGRATION TO VENEZUELA WITH BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRESS BUT MANAGED TO HANDLE THIS SENSITIVE SUBJECT IN A DIPLOMATIC NON-CONTROVERSIAL MANNER AT ALL TIMES. SOARES WAS PLEASED BY HIS WARM RECEPTION BY AD AND TOLD THE DCM THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ HAD PROMISED SOARES "SUPPORT". END SUMMARY.

2. MARIO SOARES, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF PORTUGAL, ARRIVED IN CARACAS ON DECEMBER 30 AT THE INVITATION OF THE GOV TO ATTEND THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY NATIONALIZATION CEREMONIES ON JANUARY 1. HE MET WITH PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE ACCION DEMOCRATICA PARTY, WAS PRESENT AT THE ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S GREETING OF THE PRESIDENT BY THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND THE GOVERNMENT, AND HAD BREAKFAST WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

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3. SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVAL SOARES HELD A FAR-RANGING PRESS CONFERENCE. SOARES STATED THAT "PLURALISTIC SOCIALISM" IN PORTUGAL WAS STRENGTHENED BY THE EVENTS OF NOVEMBER 25 BUT EMPHASIZED THAT THE PSP FEELS THE COMMUNISTS SHOULD REMAIN WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTIONS. WHEN ASKED ABOUT ANGOLA, SOARES SAID THE GOP IS MAINTAINING NEUTRALITY TOWARD THE WARRING FACTIONS AND EXPRESSED SORROW THAT THE VARIOUS ANGOLAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS HAD BEEN UNWILLING TO COMPLY WITH THEIR AGREEMENT WITH PORTUGAL TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT. SOARES NOTED THAT THE GOP MET ITS COMMITMENT TO WITHDRAW BY NOVEMBER 11. HE SINGLED OUT CUBA, THE SOVIET UNION, ZAIRE, AND SOUTH AFRICA AS SUPPORTERS OF ONE OR ANOTHER OF THE ANGOLAN COMBATANTS. ON THE QUESTION OF PORTUGUESE IMMIGRATION TO VENEZUELA (A MATTER OF SOME CONTROVERSY HERE--CARACAS 12931 AND CARACAS A-218), SOARES GAVE A CAREFUL AND DIPLOMATIC REPLY COMPLIMENTING BOTH VENEZUELA AND THE LARGE VENEZUELAN PORTUGUESE COLONY ON THE SMOOTH INTEGRATION OF THE PORTUGUESE INTO VENEZUELAN SOCIETY WHILE STRESSING THAT ANY ADDITIONAL PORTUGUESE IMMIGRATION WOULD BE LIMITED TO THE SKILLED. SOARES' ONLY REFERENCE TO THE USE WAS IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION REGARDING THE SUFFRAGE BY PORTUGUESE CITIZENS RESIDENT ABROAD. SOARES REPLIED BY CITING A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS THIS RAISES, INCLUDING THE FACT THAT COMMUNISTS CANNOT OBTAIN VISAS TO CAMPAIGN AMONG THE MILLION AND A HALF PORTUGUESE RESIDENT IN THE US, WHICH PUTS THE COMMUNISTS AT A DISADVANTAGE VIS-A-VIS THE OTHER PARTIES.

4. SOARES WAS ACCOMPANIED AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE BY NUMEROUS SUPPORTERS AMONG THE LARGE (PERHAPS 250,000 PORTUGUESE COLONY RESIDENT HERE.

5. TV PERSONALITY SOFIA IMBER IN A HIGHLY LAUDATORY ARTICLE IN EL UNIVERSAL DECEMBER 30 PRAISED PRESIDENT PEREZ'S INVITATION TO SOARES AND COMPARED SOARES HIMSELF TO A "TOUCHSTONE" ABLE TO DISTINGUISH BASE FROM NOBLE METAL.

6. SOARES WAS ACCOMPANIED THROUGHOUT HIS VISIT BY VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO PORTUGAL, ALFREDO BALDO CASANOVA. THE DCM HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO RENEW A PREVIOUS ACQUAINTANCE WITH SARES AT BALDO'S HOME AND SUSTAINED A WIDE-RANGING ALTHOUGH INTERMITTENT CONVERSATION. AMONG THE ITEMS SOARES MENTIONED:
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(A) IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ, THE PRESIDENT HAD DEMONSTRATED HIS DEEP CONCERN OVER THE CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA. AT A MEETING OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF ACCION DEMOCRATICA, FORMER PRESIDENT ROMULO BETANCOURT HAD EVIDENCED A SIMILAR PREOCCUPATION. (B) SOARES HAD NOT BEEN AWARE THAT CUBAN PLANES WERE USING THE AZORES. HE FOUND THIS INCREDIBLE SINCE THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE WAS STAUNCHLY ANTI-COMMUNIST AND

ATTRIBUTED THE CUBAN VENTURE TO THE "AMBIGUITY" OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. HE SAID HE WOULD STRAIGHTEN THIS OUT AS SOON AS HE RETURNED TO LISBON. (C) SOARES HAD SPOKEN TO PRESIDENT PEREZ CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTLING PORTUGUESE ANGOLAN REFUGEES IN VENEZUELA. THE PRESIDENT HAD INFORMED HIM THAT HE WAS IN FAVOR OF SUCH A PROJECT BUT THAT OPPOSITION ON THE PART OF VENEZUELAN UNIONS MADE HIS POSITION DIFFICULT. SOARES SAID THAT NUMBERS WERE NOT DISCUSSED. (D) SOARES STATED THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ ASSURED HIM OF "SUPPORT" ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT SPECIFY WHAT FORM SUCH SUPPORT WOULD TAKE. (E) SOARES WAS INTENT ON ENLISTING SUPPORT OF THE LARGE AND WEALTHY PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY IN VENEZUELA AND INDICATED THAT HE HAD SEVERAL MEETINGS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS AND WAS PLANNING TO SPEND THE FIRST HOURS OF THE NEW YEAR AT A PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY FUNCTION. (F) HE WAS HIGHLY LAUDATORY OF AMBASSADOR CARLUCCI AND DCM OKUN AND GENTLY POINTED OUT THAT HIS RELATIONS WITH THE EMBASSY WERE DIFFERENT NOW IN COMPARISON TO THE SALAZAR/CAETANO ERA WHEN "YOU AND I USED TO SNEAK ROUND CORNERS TO SEE EACH OTHER AND NO ONE ELSE AT THE EMBASSY WOULD TALK TO ME."

7. THE CONVERSATION ALSO RANGED ACROSS A NUMBER OF MUTUAL FRIENDS AND, AS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST TO EMBASSY LISBON, SOME OF SOARES' COMMENTS ARE INCLUDED BELOW. (A) FRANCISCO SOUSA TAVARES AND SOFIA ARE NOW SOLIDLY IN THE SOARES CAMP, AS IS FRANCISCO LINO NETO. (B) ONE OF HIS GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENTS WAS THE SWITCH TO RADICALISM OF PERREIRA DA MOURA. (C) FRANCISCO SALGADO ZENHA DID A SPLENDID JOB AS MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND IS ENJOYING HIS PRESENT POSITION AS MINISTER OF FINANCE. (D) ALTHOUGH HIS RELATIONS WITH LIGIA VELOSO HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT STRAINED RECENTLY, SHE IS SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE IDEOLOGICALLY BETWEEN THE RADICALS AND SOARES. (E) CUNHAL'S DOWNFALL BEGAN WITH THE PUBLICATION OF THE ORIANA FALLACI INTERVIEW. FALLACI HAD SHOWN SOARES HER NOTES AND HE HAD URGED HER TO PUBLISH THEM. (F) PEDRO DA SILVA PINTO, CONFIDENTIAL

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CAETANO'S LAST SECRETARY OF INFORMATION, HAD BEEN OFFERED THE AMBASSADORSHIP TO BANGKOK BUT HAD CHOSEN TO IMMIGRATE TO THE UNITED STATES. (G) GERALDO SALLES LANE HAD BEEN IN JAIL AS A RESULT OF THE SPINOLA CONSPIRACY BUT WAS NOW OUT AND FUNCTIONING AT THE GREMIO LITRARIO.

8. SOARES WAS GIVEN RED CARPET TREATMENT BY THE GOV. WE WERE STRUCK BY SOARES' CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE IN PORTUGAL. HE SOUNDED EVERY BIT LIKE A FUTURE PRIME MINISTER. HE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO AFFIRM HIS FRIENDSHIP FOR THE UNITED STATES. SHLAUDEMAM

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LEADERS, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ullricre
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CARACA00083
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760003-0881
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760187/aaaaczjw.tel
Line Count: 165
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ullricre
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <30 JUL 2004 by ullricre>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOARES VISITS VENEZUELA
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, VE, PO, SOCIALIST PARTY, (SOARES, MARIO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006